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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RANGOON 001298

SIPDIS

FOR EAP/MLS AND DRL/SEA (PSAWCHYN)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/07/2015

TAGS: PHUM BM

SUBJECT: BURMA: THE MEANING OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FREEDOM

REF: STATE 202764

Classified By: P/E Chief W. Patrick Murphy for Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

1. (U) Reftel requested quotes from individuals around the world on the meaning of human rights and freedom. Burma is a source of great inspiration in this regard, given the courage of its many activists and pro-democracy supporters who have struggled for years to overcome the tyranny and repression of a brutal military regime.

2. (SBU) We offer below a selection of quotes that would be relevant for the Department's commemoration of Human Rights Day during the week of December 5-9. Regretfully, however, those who speak out publicly inside Burma on these issues face serious repercussions from a regime that has a total disregard for freedom of speech. In several cases (para 5), we have indicated that the identity of an individual must be protected if their quote is used in print.

QUOTABLES, WITH ATTRIBUTION

3. (U) Aung San Suu Kyi: The Nobel Peace Prize Laureate has published abundant views on human rights and democracy and many of her speeches are in the public domain. Given that she has spent over ten years in detention for the peaceful expression of her political views, and that she is currently serving yet another lengthy stint under house arrest, we would highly recommend that her voice be among those highlighted. A few examples from ASSK, the General Secretary of the National League for Democracy:

--"Every fight for freedom is an individual fight. It is an individual fighting for his or her rights. At the same time, it is a universal struggle, the struggle of all who believe it is wrong to inflict wrong on others." From a letter smuggled out of Burma and quoted in honor of the 100th anniversary of the Nobel Peace Prize, December 8, 2001.

--"A nation where its citizens can be subjugated to the abuse of power by an individual or group of individuals cannot be called 'independent.'" (ibid.)

--"The only real prison is fear, and the only real freedom is freedom from fear." Aung San Suu Kyi, from her publication of essays, "Freedom From Fear and Other Writings" (1996, revised).

4. (U) More quotable quotes:

"Law, order, and justice have been employed as an implement of repression and to silence dissent." UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Burma, Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, in a report to the UNGA's Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee on October 27, 2005. The regime has denied Pinheiro a visit to Burma since November 2003.

--"We seek freedom for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, not for mercy, bad health, nor poor health. We seek freedom for Daw Aung Suu Kyi for she has a duty to perform. She is a person accepted by all local and international bodies who could bring reconciliation to this nation. Free Aung San Suu Kyi." From a statement issued in Rangoon on April 8, 2004 by the Central Executive Committee of the NLD.

IDENTITY PROTECTED

5. (C) Quotes that require identify protection:

--"In this unfinished revolution, should my soul be gripped with fear, be hesitant, and lack courage -- let your souls enter into mine and steer me along." Min Ko Naing, former student leader, freed on November 19, 2004 after 15 years in Burmese prisons (most of which was in solitary confinement); in a poem he penned while in detention. (Unclassified if his name is redacted and he is identified as a former political prisoner and a leading dissident.)

--"The first thing I could feel when I set foot on American soil is fairness, social harmony, and responsibility. Because of these values, American is an achievement of mankind, the land of opportunity, and a beacon for freedom and fairness." Khin Maung Lwin, International Visitor program participant, current businessman, and a former air

force pilot, in a letter to U.S. Embassy personnel, October 12 2005. (Unclassified if his name is redacted and he is identified as a recent IV participant.)

--"The last I knew, I was still a party divisional leader and I've got work to do." U Kyaw Hsan, a then 72 year-old Member of Parliament-elect, who was released on November 19, 2004 after serving nine of the previous twelve years in prison. He spoke to an Embassy officer a week after his release and explained why he was so quickly back at work at NLD headquarters. U Kyaw Hsan was re-arrested March 17 of this year and remains in prison. (Unclassified if his name is redacted and he is identified as a 73 year-old pro-democracy party activist.)

--"We hope for the best, but expect the worst." NLD Secretary U Lwin to Embassy officer on May 13, 2004, one

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month after his own release from house arrest, describing the party's dealings with the Burmese regime over the detention of Aung San Suu Kyi and other party leaders. (Unclassified if his name is redacted and he is identified as a pro-democracy opposition party leader.)

--"Our people won't be duped." NLD Central Executive Member U Nyunt Wei on April 19, 2004, commenting to Embassy officers on the military regime's efforts to convene a national convention to rubber stamp a new constitution creating what he called a "constitutional dictatorship." (Unclassified if his name is redacted and he is identified as a pro-democracy opposition party leader.)

--"We don't like the captain of the boat, and we don't like the destination." (ibid.)

STOLTZ